

Steward of the Family Farm

By **Brian Haines**

NC Forest Service

Andrew Taylor was like many landowners who are unsure of the best approach to take in managing their own forestland, until he discovered North Carolina's Forest Stewardship Program.

The Forest Stewardship program is designed to encourage and help those who want to manage their forestland for its natural beauty, wildlife habitat, recreation, or productive timber. The program is also intended to help landowners protect clean water through appropriate soil conservation practices. The program is open to any private landowner who has 10 acres or more of forestland.

Taylor and his siblings grew up on the farmland which has been in the family since 1892. However, little work had been done on the land for a long time, a situation Taylor wished to correct by becoming a good steward of his land. Taylor's journey into stewardship began when he decided to sell timber on 100 acres of the 320 acre family farm that he owns with his siblings. At the time, he didn't know the North Carolina Forest Service (NCFS) was available to help him.

After reading about a landowner meeting in the newspaper, Taylor decided to attend and was introduced to David Halley, a consulting forester, and discovered all the benefits of working with the NCFS and the Forest Stewardship Program. Part of the meeting involved a tour of properties that had been managed for forestry, and this was where Taylor learned a lot. He approached the consulting forester about his own property and later the two would tour the family farm where Halley made suggestions, including working with the NCFS. Taylor admits that he didn't know the services that were available to him until he met Halley.

"There is a lot of information I could've had before I planted, a lot of stuff I had done on my own, stuff that came naturally as an old farm boy but I still needed help, I was just asking the wrong people," Taylor said. "After I got involved with the (North Carolina) Forest Service things became productive."

Steve Thompson, Caswell County Ranger, wants people to



Andrew Taylor, left, and forest ranger Steve Thompson discuss plans for the Taylor farm.

know that there are services available to landowners through the NCFS.

"Ideally, we will write a management plan that works with the landowners objectives," Thompson said. "Some of Mr. Taylor's stands are not healthy enough to be productive so we're working with him on that. Some of what they are doing includes some site prep work on areas that he wants to plant. Mr. Taylor has an interest in the land and he's willing to do the work."

Taylor's other goals include planting back trees in harvested areas, thinning trees under the southern pine beetle program, and wildlife management. A hunt club leases the property and helps him keep the borders well marked.

The NCFS looks at the objectives of the landowner and works together with other agencies to help landowners achieve the goals outlined in their stewardship plan. Any good stewardship plan will incorporate a number of public agencies working together to assist landowners by providing educational, technical, and financial assistance, according to Thompson. These resource professionals help landowners realize the benefits of being good forest stewards.

Thompson says they get a lot of work through word of mouth, sometimes more than they can handle. In fact, while in the process of helping Taylor they were introduced to his neighbor who is now also receiving services from the NCFS and is engaged in Forest Stewardship activities as well.

Taylor wishes he had known about the opportunities the NCFS offered earlier, but says he is pleased to be able to move ahead with their assistance in the future. His main goal is to create a healthy stewardship property for all the children and grandchildren of his family so the Taylor family legacy will continue for generations to come.



Andrew Taylor is determined to be a good steward of his family farm.